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Atari Online News, Etc.  
A-ONE Online Magazine  
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~ More ST-Log Available! ~ E-mail Becoming Passe? ~ China Censorship!  
~ Malware A Group Effort ~ Verifying Age Online? ~ XaAES Docs Online!

-\* Microsoft Agrees To Play Nice \*-  
-\* eBay To Raise Fees On Online Store! \*-  
-\* Most Blogs: Storytelling, Not Journalism! \*-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard  
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Although I'd agree that it depends on where you were this past week, I'd have to say that it was a pretty good week, for a change. Sure, the temperatures were around 100 degrees for a couple of days earlier in the week, but having our swimming pool negated that factor quite nicely! And, I was still able to get some smaller projects done outside. Last week, I stripped the varnish off of our shed (amazing what a power-washer will do!) and now I have to decide what color to paint it. I also sanded down the edging around the pool, and started to re-paint that. Now if I can only find a metallic gold paint that won't tarnish or fade due to the chlorinated pool water. The first brand of paint that I tried turned out really bad (good thing I only painted a small patch!). Trial and error, I guess.

I've also managed to get out to the golf course at least once a week these past few weeks. This is something that I've missed being able to do for many years - as my game was showing. But, I've been having some good rounds (comparatively) over time, with few lapses here and there. It's fun, regardless of what my wife says about golf!

So, so far, it's been a pretty great summer/temporary retirement. This summer reminds me of when I was young (okay, a lot younger) and I had the "freedom" to do pretty much whatever I wanted, when I wanted. Sure, this time I have more responsibility and need to do things around the house, but I have the opportunity to do those things whenever I want rather than be dictated by whenever I can find the time. I have to tell you, this lifestyle agrees with me. It's too bad that it likely won't last too long because reality will hit me sooner or later and I'll have to return to the workforce. Things like food, clothing, mortgage, etc. still need to be obtainable! But for the present, I'm going to milk this for all it's worth!

Until next time...

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Archive ([www.atarimagazines.com](http://www.atarimagazines.com)). In celebration, today we're announcing that the site now offers the full text of 19 issues of ST-Log Magazine. This includes more than 600 articles and a gallery of the magazine's covers.

<http://www.atarimagazines.com/st-log/>

ST-Log was devoted to Atari's 16-bit ST line of computers. It began as an insert in ANALOG Computing magazine in 1986. It spun off as a separate magazine for about three years, before being folded back into ANALOG again in 1989. ANALOG and ST-Log were sold to Larry Flynt Publishing in 1988. The Classic Computer Magazine Archive has permission to share the 19 issues published by L.F.P., from April 1988 until ST-Log ceased publication in 1989.

In addition, AtariMagazines.com recently added a cover image gallery for Compute! magazine, with a nearly complete collection of covers from 1980 through 1988. (The site offers the full text of nearly 100 issues of Compute!.)

<http://www.atarimagazines.com/compute/>

The site launched July 27, 1996 as "The Digital Antic Project" with the full text of two issues of Antic magazine. The site was later renamed to The Classic Computer Magazine Archive and added articles from SStart, Creative Computing, Compute II, Hi-Res, Creative Computing Video & Arcade Games Magazine, and Tandy Whiz Kids comic books.

### EasyMiNT 1.6 Released

EasyMiNT has finally been updated in order to support the latest CVS versions of FreeMiNT/XaAES! The new update includes the packages for FreeMiNT, XaAES and also Teradesk. If you never been into MiNT, this program can be described a standalone installer for SpareMiNT RPM-packages. In other words, a good introduction to MiNT :)

New in this release:

- \* You can choose now between FreeMiNT 1.15 and 1.16
- \* New versions of XaAES and Teradesk could be installed
- \* Added lp.xdd which creates a printer device under /dev
- \* Update of the rpm packages basic, standard, devel, libs, net
- \* RAW partition support added again

The files can be found on the authors website:

URL: <http://atari.st-katharina-apotheke.de/home.php?view=1&seite=0&lang=en&>

GokMasE has announced:

We have recently been working hard to supply a thorough and accurate documentation for XaAES. Chances are that even advanced users will be unaware of certain features and shortcuts, and since XaAES has had such a tremendous development lately, chances are that new users might be interested to check it out. Hence the need for proper documentation!

The docs might seem too include details some will find trivial at times, but there is a reason for that too - by covering such information as well, the documentation can also serve as a reference for the GUI components.

Nowadays it is absolutely fair to say that XaAES despite its alpha status is a very stable and mature project, that definitely has reached the original goal - to offer a free replacement for the AES in MultiTOS. Many would say that it even leaves N.AES behind.

You will find the online documentation on the XaAES website:

URL: <http://xaaes.atariforge.net/>

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. It's going to be another short column this week, and not just because of a shortage of material this time.

Some of you might remember my mentioning that I recently bought a house and was dealing with moving after being at our last place for 12 years. Remember me saying, "I HATE MOVING"? Well, you might have actually HEARD me screaming it. <grin>

I'm still not completely moved, and I'm doing what I can after work and over the weekends and such, but it's been very hot this past week, and I'm not the youngster that I used to be. So...

My legs are sore, my lower back is sore. My mid and upper back is sore, my arms are sore, my neck is screaming at me for being a thick-headed idiot, and my wife is alternately shaking her head at my stubbornness and wagging her finger at me for not getting things done on schedule.

But I'll be done with the move by the end of the month... even if I'm in a wheelchair by that time.

So I'm going to finish up this column, go take a long, hot shower, and then hit the sack and hope that I can drift off to sleep and awake to find that the muscle aches and pains and such were just a bad dream and that we've been moved in for the past half a year or so. Yeah, I know. I'm not holding my breath for it.

Oh, by the way, our good friend Tom (TJ) Andrews has suffered a loss this past week. His father passed away on Tuesday, after a (relatively) short illness. TJ has been a close friend to A-ONE almost since its inception, and we offer our heartfelt thoughts and prayers for he and his loved ones. If you know Tom from the articles he's written... both for us and for other assorted magazines during his 8-bit days... and would like to offer your condolences, you can email them to me and I'll see that he gets 'em.

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup  
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David Leaver asks about using his HP printer with his ST:

"I have an Hewlett Packard colour laserjet 2550L. Is there a suitable driver which would allow me to use this with NVDI 5?"

Edward Baiz tells David:

"My wife has a HP 2100 laser printer. I chose one of the HP laser drivers on the NVDI list and it worked fine, but I will admit I only printed text and not graphics. I would just keep trying the various ones out until one works."

Peter Schneider tells Edward:

"That seems very interesting. Even it did not put out graphics, I'd like to know if any program permitting interactive output would provoke a printer's reaction.

E.g. TEMPUS editor permits to put ESC sequences into the text, or any DBase compatible soft permits to give out via the '?' (question mark) commands.

If the printer does so, at least one could give out features like bold or italics, formfeed and others..."

Edward tells Peter:

"Well under NVDI I was able to use the printer in Papyrus Gold and Calamus SL.

I was able to change the fonts, size, etc. Just no graphics. I will admit that I did not try to solve the graphics thing, so it still may have been possible."

Lonny Pursell posts this about the new version of GFA-BASIC Editor that has just been released:

"For those that enjoy programming in BASIC...

The list-of-changes is rather large. Please read the documentation for all the details.

Note: This version will not work correctly with previous configuration files. You must delete the \*.gbe files in your \home\ directory before you use it!

<http://www.bright.net/~gfabasic/> [AtarIRC, GFA-Basic, Hades060] "

George Nakos posts this as a reply to a question I asked a couple of weeks ago about emulators:

"Ok, let's try starting this thread afresh...

-Aranym(multiplatform): Well, 'nuff said by others

-Steem Engine (window\$/linux): The most usable atari st emulator. Very complete and precise emulation of the ST/E hardware. Supports virtual hard drives, so it can be used for most apps.

-Saint (window\$): Another good emulator, but not as complete as steem.

WinSTon (window\$): development stopped. Looked nice though

-Hatari (multiplatform): WinSTon with UAE 68000 emulation. Lagging a bit from steem and saint, it is nevertheless interesting.

There are also others as you already know (StonX, TOSbox, STEmulator, FaST, Pacifist, Echo, Gemulator), but development for those stopped for a long time now."

David Wade adds his thoughts:

"There are still some things Gemulator is better at than STEEM. Like it has big screen support."

'Simon' adds:

"I always loved Winston, its sources were available for a while if I remember correctly.

Oh and someone recompiled it so it ran faster, and the result was called STEW (I think the initial idea was to carry on Winston development, but as far as I know it stopped)."

Edward Baiz adds his preference to the mix:

"Well, no emulator is perfect. The best one will run just about everything and at the same speed on the original ST. The best one for Windows that I have found is STeeM. This one still needs an original ST to save out files that will later be ran on the PC. I was surprised that I was able to run copy protected games/programs."

Joakim Högberg posts this about documentation for XaAES:

"We have recently been working hard to supply a thorough and accurate documentation for XaAES. Chances are that even advanced users will be unaware of certain features and shortcuts, and since XaAES has had such a tremendous development lately, chances are that new users might be interested to check it out. Hence the need for proper documentation!

The docs might seem to include details some will find trivial at times, but there is a reason for that too - by covering such information as well, the documentation can also serve as a reference for the GUI components.

Nowadays it is absolutely fair to say that XaAES despite its alpha status is a very stable and mature project, that definitely has reached the original goal - to offer a free replacement for the AES in MultiTOS. Many would say that it even leaves N.AES behind.

You will find the online documentation on the XaAES website:

<http://xaaes.atariforge.net/> "

Martin Byttebier tells Joakim:

"I'm one of those who states XaAES leaves N.AES behind. I really don't have any reason whatsoever to fall back to N.AES. And yes despite it's alpha status it's rock solid (at least on my setup).

Sure there are still some issues which needs to be fixed but as far I can tell these issues are minor and doesn't affect the good working of XaAES (latest cvs version).

Well done Joakim. I'm sure the docs will be a good source for both the layman and the experienced user."

Edward Baiz tells Martin:

"I agree with Martin here. The one time I got XaAES to load, I was impressed."

Odd Skancke reads that and asks Edward:

"You only got XaAES to load once?"

Jean-Francois Lemaire adds:

"Wonderful job, Joakim. The only problem with that documentation is that it reveals those nifty new features (mainly the window context menu) that aren't available yet to us users :-). Someone will have to release an updated version of FreeMiNT.

Joakim adds:

"Excellent! I am very glad to hear that there is a lot of interest in the docs!

Yes, that is true. The window context menu is a very recent addition and I should have made sure that I had current binary available on site before publishing the documentation. One of the main ideas with the unofficial XaAES page is to offer fairly frequent updates in binary form, so that users should not have to go through the process of installing dev tools in order to get a working product.

I will look into uploading current binaries before I leave for a short holiday trip later this week.

Ok, the binaries should be up for download now! These files are however 100% untested, but hopefully the 030 and 040 versions will be okay. the 000 kernel is known to cause problems at this time, but this is probably going to be fixed soon.

As usual, go here to grab the file: <http://xaaes.atariforge.net>

Have fun! "

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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## 'Evo' Games Console Creator Talks Ship Dates, Features

Is a new proposed games console merely the next generation of vaporware?

No, it's not the Infinium Labs' Phantom, although that may be the first



thing to come to mind. A rival, Envizions Computer Entertainment Corporation, insists that it will in fact deliver its entertainment console, "Evo: Phase One," by this fall.

Despite the obvious similarities to Infinium Labs' Phantom, a product long on promises but extremely short on products, Envizions chief executive officer Derrick Samuels insists that the Evo will ship.

"A lot of people think Evo is like the Phantom because it has some similar characteristics," Samuels said. "I'm hearing a lot of people want to know if it's real, if it will exist, because they're comparing us to The Phantom console. We're a completely different company, with a different management team. We are real; we are going to ship."

Envizions began taking orders last week for the Evo: Phase One, a system that combines a computer, media center, and PC gaming unit into one box, much like the elusive Phantom was supposed to.

The Phantom console has been a controversial product in the gaming industry due to constant pushing back of the release date. Evo is scheduled to be released on October 20 and Samuels swears it will be ready. The Evo is powered by a AMD Athlon 64 3200 chip and 512 Mbytes of RAM, with graphics powered by the Sapphire Radeon HDMI X1600 Pro graphic card. The box will also apparently include an 80-Gbyte hard drive, a DVD-ROM, TV tuner, and a biometric game save and security feature, possibly a fancy name for a fingerprint reader. The box will run the Microsoft Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 software, as well as an Akimbo TV-on-demand application. Still, Garnett Lee, managing editor for Ziff-Davis video game site 1UP.com, says that the system specs are still pretty reminiscent of The Phantom.

"Basically what they're selling amounts to an 'ok' media center PC," Lee said. "It uses a bunch of off-the-shelf stuff to make a set-top jack-of-all-trades box. TV tuner card so it plays on your TV, DVR functionality, DVD player, and then game player as well. But on that front it will run into the problem of being underpowered relative to gaming PCs and for that matter in comparison to Xbox360 or PlayStation 3 (PS3)."

The system will sell for \$679.99. Samuels said that they set this price point to differentiate themselves from PS3.

"We wanted to launch it at \$599 but we didn't want to get a price comparison to Sony PlayStation 3," he said. "We're putting a few more extra perks that brought the BOM a little higher than expected. We thought that was a good price and you can upgrade it later on."

Lee worries that the library of games will be too limited to justify this price point. Analysts also worry that one interface will not be sufficient to the various types of games that users will want to play.

The Evo has a liquid cooling system that Samuels says they are still working to accommodate in their design.

"There are still some cosmetic changes we need to make," he said. "We've got to add the USB ports to the front, make it a couple inches bigger, and we've got to accommodate a liquid coolant system. It's pretty much ready to go. We could launch next month if we wanted to."

Envizions has been working to launch the Evo for three years now, having previewed a prototype in January at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. The Phase One system runs on Media Center 2005, a Microsoft

operating system. Phase Two is scheduled to run on Envizions' own proprietary operating system. Samuels says they have yet to determine if it will be Linux-embedded or Microsoft-embedded. For now, the company is concentrating on Phase One, hoping to sell enough units to keep the company afloat until they launch Phase Two, which he estimates will happen in 2008.

"We've got a few orders already and actually we've got a lot of exposure," he said. "We're not trying to sell 100,000 units off the bat, we just want to sell just enough to get going. We're a smaller company but we think our business model and product is a little different and will appeal to everybody, not just gamers."

# Atari Ships Most Intense Dragon Ball Z Fighting Game to Date

Atari, Inc. announced that Super Dragon Ball Z for the Sony Playstation Portable (PSP) and PlayStation2 computer entertainment system has shipped to retail stores nationwide. Developed by former Street Fighter II producer Noritaka Funamizu's new studio, Crafts & Meister, Super DBZ delivers an authentic, more challenging fighting experience, complete with more intensity and unique combinations than have ever been available before in a DBZ fighting game.

Super DBZ gives players an extreme fighting experience in the air or on the ground with characters taken straight from the world of DBZ and levels created in the art style of Akira Toriyama, the original creator of the Dragon Ball manga. Each of the 13 characters and 5 unlockable secret characters in the game, including DBZ superheroes Goku, Gohan and Vegeta, have their own catalog of exclusive attacks and fighting styles that are faithful to the series.

"DBZ devotees and fighting game fans are sure to be excited by our next installment in the DBZ franchise. By working with one of the top fighting game producers in the world, we have developed a deeper and richer fighting experience than ever before," said Emily Anadu, Product Manager, Atari, Inc. "The combination of the unique character fighting styles and environments created in the original styles of the Dragon Ball manga in Super DBZ will thrill hard core fighting gamers and DBZ fanatics alike."

Super DBZ has already captured critical acclaim, earning a "GameDaily Nod" at this year's E3 and a runner-up award for IGN.com's E3 2006 "Best PS2 Fighting Game."

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->A-ONE Gaming Online      -      Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Sam Tramiel: Talkin' Crazy 'Bout Jaguar

Back in its early days, Next Generation was a top-tier magazine that

probably did a better job of combining a hardcore passion for gaming and genuinely hard-hitting journalism than any other publication at the time. It was particularly known for its interviews, which were consistently great reads. Some were so good that they're still memorable to this day, but some are more notorious than others. One of the most bizarre was a conversation with Sam Tramiel, then-president of Atari Corp. Atari was pushing the Jaguar, which would turn out to be a spectacular failure and the company's last foray into the console business. Mr. Tramiel was nothing if not confident in this interview, though, and bullishly predicted great things were ahead for his struggling machine.

Sadly, he also appeared more than slightly out of touch, and spun reality so much that one can get dizzy just reading his words. The piece started off okay, with the usual questions about Jaguar sales ("Sales have gone off better since the price has been dropped to \$149."), and whether or not the system was really 64-bit ("Absolutely, uncategorically yes.")

It's only a little, teensy bit weaker than PlayStation. Really. But after the preliminaries things start getting hairy, with Tramiel spouting preposterous statements with little basis in reality. "If Sony comes in at \$249 or \$299, we'll do whatever we can to have the ITC - that's the International Trade Commission of the United States - to go after them. That's called dumping." Sony did, but Atari did no such thing. Tramiel was asked what a fair price for the PlayStation would be. "\$500." How many Jag owners would buy the forthcoming CD add-on? "Right now we're expecting that 50% of Jaguar owners will buy CD players. And, if it's a higher percentage then, well, great." We'd be surprised if it hit 10%.

The topic turned to competitors, and Tramiel had a lot to say. "Jaguar is as powerful, if not more powerful than Saturn." And the PlayStation? "PlayStation, I must say, is a little, little bit more powerful in certain areas - but not in others - it's a little bit more stronger machine than Jaguar." That wasn't enough. He clarified: "A little, little bit." A moment later, he seemed to reconsider further. "PlayStation is a little bit more - not more technology, but PlayStation does have more memory than Jaguar, it's using more silicon as a solution." It's hard to imagine Next Generation's interviewer keeping a straight face throughout.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

#### Internet Pioneers Debate Net Neutrality

A Net neutrality law isn't needed because the U.S. already has antitrust laws that would keep broadband carriers from acting in an uncompetitive manner, Internet pioneer David Farber said Monday in a debate against TCP/IP co-creator Vinton Cerf.

The two squared off at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank in Washington, D.C., as the U.S Senate prepares to consider a

wide-ranging broadband bill. Farber, a computer science and public policy professor at Carnegie Mellon University, said that Congress should not pass a law prohibiting large broadband providers such as AT&T and Comcast from blocking or slowing access to competing Web content.

If Congress decides it can regulate broadband carriers, it is a small step to Congress also regulating Internet content, Farber said. "Given a foot in the door, I think that door will open," he said.

The door is already open, said Cerf, vice president and chief Internet evangelist at Google, with Congress attempting to regulate Internet content in several areas. At the debate, audience members mentioned regulations requiring that Internet providers allow wiretapping capabilities for law enforcement and a recent effort to outlaw Internet gambling in the U.S.

The bill before the Senate would streamline local franchising rules and allow telecom carriers to offer television service over Internet Protocol and includes a list of rights for Internet users, but doesn't include strong net neutrality rules, critics say. Senator Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, on Friday repeated his intention to "do everything to block this bill and kill it" without stronger net neutrality provisions.

Net neutrality provisions would not be new regulation, Cerf said. In August 2005, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) removed "common carrier" requirements from DSL providers, ending the rule that they carry all traffic, he said.

"We had something taken away, which I think was a very important principle," Cerf said.

But Farber, creator of the first distributed computer system, said there's little evidence so far of a problem with broadband providers blocking competing content. A poorly written law could cause unintended consequences, he added.

Instead, antitrust lawsuits against carriers that block or slow competing content would work as well as a law, he said.

But antitrust lawsuits could take years, and most broadband customers have little or no choice of providers, Cerf said.

One audience member asked Cerf if search engine, browser, or operating system vendors should also face net neutrality rules. Those are different markets than broadband, where most U.S. residents have one or two providers, Cerf answered.

Internet users have several choices of search engines and can switch with "zero pain," he said. "It's not so simple to switch back and forth between broadband carriers," he said. "What's worse than a regulated monopoly? The answer is, an unregulated monopoly."

Farber urged people on both sides of the net neutrality debate to approach the complicated issue with fewer TV ads that aim for emotions over facts. There's "too many bumper stickers, too much noise, and not enough facts in digestible form being put up there," he said.

Microsoft will commit to following the principles of its 2002 antitrust settlement with the U.S. government beyond its end in late 2007, and in some cases, the company will expand upon those requirements, a Microsoft executive said Wednesday.

Microsoft has a responsibility to encourage both innovation and competition in the IT industry, said Brad Smith, Microsoft's senior vice president and general counsel, during a speech in Washington, D.C. The company will expand the operating-system antitrust settlement by releasing all of its software APIs (application programming interfaces), for programs such as Microsoft Office, and not just middleware APIs as required in the November 2002 settlement in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Microsoft decided to release the principles now to generate discussion among regulators and competitors before the scheduled release of the Windows Vista operating system in early 2007, Smith said. Microsoft has learned several lessons from the U.S. and European antitrust cases, he said, including that an operating system matters less to consumers than the applications that run on top of it.

Microsoft will also commit to allow OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) to remove any Microsoft products when shipping a PC with the Windows operating system, not just remove "middleware" that's tightly integrated with Windows such as Internet Explorer or Windows Media Player, Smith said. Microsoft will commit to allowing OEMs to switch defaults for applications or remove Microsoft's products entirely from Windows, he said.

Smith's policy announcement comes a week after the European Commission fined Microsoft \$357 million for failing to comply with the terms of a March 2004 antitrust settlement. In May the U.S. Department of Justice asked a judge to extend parts of the U.S. antitrust settlement dealing with technical documentation requirements until late 2009 or beyond.

Even though some antitrust issues remain, that won't stop Microsoft from moving forward with commitments to uphold principles of competition, Smith said. "The U.S. antitrust ruling recognized that competition at all levels should be encouraged," he said.

Microsoft's 12 new "Windows principles" will ensure choice for computer manufacturers and customers and will guarantee that software developers will be able to create applications that run on top of Windows, Smith said. "Ultimately, users are in control of their PCs," Smith said. "Users get to decide what runs on their PCs when they take them home."

As part of the principles, the company will make four new commitments that weren't part of the antitrust settlement:

- \* To design its Windows Live suite of Internet services separate from Windows, so that customers can choose the Windows operating system with or without Windows Live.

- \* To open up most of its operating system patents to license to other developers. The only OS patents Microsoft won't license are ones on the appearance of Windows.

- \* To be "more energetic" in its support of industry standards with the goal of creating interoperable products.

- \* To design and license Windows in a way that allows customers to go to

any lawful Web site or use any competing application or Web service.

The fourth new principle echoes Microsoft's support of a net neutrality law now being debated in Congress.

#### Amnesty Accuses US Firms Over China Web Censorship

Microsoft Corp, Google Inc and Yahoo Inc have breached the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in colluding with China to censor the Internet, Amnesty International said on Thursday.

The three publicly traded companies are ignoring their own stated commitments - which in Google's case includes corporate motto "Don't be evil" - and are in denial over the human rights implications of their actions, the group said.

"All three companies have, in one way or another, facilitated or concluded in the practice of censorship in China," London-based Amnesty said in a report.

"All three companies have demonstrated a disregard for their own internally driven and proclaimed policies. They have made promises ... which they failed to uphold in the face of business opportunities and pressure from the Chinese government," it said.

"This raises doubts about which statements made by these organizations can be trusted and which ones are public relations gestures."

Yahoo defended itself by saying its presence in China, even with the restrictions, could still help open up the country and added that it, too, was concerned by the issue.

"We believe we can make more of a difference by having even a limited presence and growing our influence, than we can by not operating in a particular country at all," Yahoo said in a statement to Reuters.

Calls to Google and Microsoft representatives in China were not immediately returned.

Amnesty said the three companies were in violation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says everyone should be guaranteed freedom of expression.

The group said it was calling on the three companies and other Internet firms to lobby Beijing to release all "cyber dissidents," be open about what filtering policies they operate and promote human rights in China.

Amnesty said some actions the firms had taken, like Google's refusal to offer an e-mail service in China due to privacy-invasion worries, were good, but more action was needed.

In May, Yahoo said it was seeking the U.S. government's help in urging China to allow more media freedom after reports linking information the company gave to Chinese authorities with the jailing of a dissident.

The case was the latest to highlight conflicts of profit and principle for companies in the world's second-biggest Internet market.

Web search leader Google has come under fire for saying it would block politically sensitive terms on its new China site, bowing to conditions set by Beijing.

Earlier this month, China sentenced reporter Li Yuanlong to two years in jail, adding to its list of writers imprisoned for expressing themselves through the country's expanding but tightly censored Internet.

### Malware Now a Group Effort

Hackers are taking a page from the open-source playbook, using the same techniques that made Linux and Apache successes to improve their malicious software, according to McAfee.

Nowhere is this more apparent than within the growing families of "bot" software, which allow hackers to remotely control infected computers. Unlike viruses of the past, bots tend to be written by a group of authors, who often collaborate by using the same tools and techniques as open source developers, said Dave Marcus, security research and communications manager with McAfee's Avert Labs.

"Over the last year and a half, we've noticed how bot development in particular has latched on to open-source tools and the open-source development model," he said.

The current generation of bot software has grown to the point where open-source software development tools make a natural fit. With hundreds of source files now being managed, developers of the Agobot family of malware, for example, are using the open-source Concurrent Versions System (CVS) software to manage their project.

McAfee researchers have described this use of open-source techniques in a new magazine set to be unveiled Monday. Called Sage, the publication features a cover story entitled "Paying a price for the open-source advantage" in its inaugural issue. McAfee plans to publish Sage every six months, Marcus said.

Marcus said his company is drawing attention to the open-source trend in order to educate users, and not as an attempt to discredit open-source alternatives to its own proprietary software products. "We think [open-source antivirus products] are fine. They've never been something that was really in the same class as ours, but we've always been big supporters of open-source antivirus," he said.

However, Marcus did take issue with security researchers who distribute samples of malicious software, a practice known as full disclosure.

"We're not taking aim at the open-source movement; we're talking about the full-disclosure model and how that effectively serves malware development," he said.

Marcus's opinion was not well-received by one security professional. Full disclosure serves legitimate researchers and helps users by making vendors more responsive, said Stefano Zanero, chief technology officer with Secure Network SRL. "I drive an A-class Mercedes," he said. "And I feel much safer since [a] car magazine revealed that the original design of the A-class was

flawed," he wrote via instant message.

"Research works on disclosure, not on secrets," Zanero added.

### Online Age Verification May Prove Complex

At MySpace.com and many other popular online hangouts, a 30-something woman can celebrate her Sweet 16 over and over with just a click of the mouse. A 12-year-old can quickly mature to meet the sites' minimum age requirements, generally 14, while an adult looking to chat with teens can virtually shed several years.

With heightened concerns over sexual predators lurking at so-called social-networking sites, state attorneys general have called for such communities, particularly MySpace, to improve age and identity checks. If only it were so easy, experts say.

"We're all just grasping for solutions," said Anne Collier, co-author of the forthcoming "MySpace Unraveled: What It Is and How to Use It Safely." "We haven't fully researched it and thought about all the implications."

News Corp.'s MySpace has met with several companies on technologies to verify ages, but it has yet to find an effective one, Michael Angus, general counsel of News Corp.'s Fox Interactive Media unit, told Congress last month.

In an interview, MySpace's safety czar, Hemanshu Nigam, said any technical solution must be part of a set that includes education and cooperation with law enforcement.

"As we progress in our evaluation of what's best out there, you're going to see many different things coming," he said.

Parents, school administrators and police have become increasingly worried that teens are finding trouble at social-networking sites, which provide tools for messaging, sharing photos and creating personal pages known as profiles. The aim of such sites is for users to expand their circles of friends.

MySpace has gotten the brunt of the complaints given its leadership with more than 94 million registered users, about 20 percent of them under 18.

In June, the mother of a 14-year-old who says she was sexually assaulted by a 19-year-old user sued MySpace and News Corp., seeking \$30 million in damages. The lawsuit, filed in a Texas state court, claims the 19-year-old lied about being a senior in high school to gain her trust and phone number.

MySpace has recently implemented policies designed to better separate kids from adults. Among the changes, adult MySpace users must already know a 14- or 15-year-old user's e-mail address or full name to initiate contact or view a profile containing personal information.

However, because age is self-reported, as it is at similar sites, adults could simply sign up as minors.

There are tools to verify age, but they work best for porn, wine-sales and



other sites meant for adults only.

A credit card, for instance, could demonstrate that a user is of age, notwithstanding a teen's ability to "borrow" a card from Dad's wallet.

More robust techniques like those from IDology Inc. and Sentinel Tech Holding Corp.'s Sentry check addresses, birth dates and other information users provide against public databases, such as voting and property records.

But many social-networking sites cater to both adults and teens - and teens can be difficult to verify.

Minors "do not possess as many unique identifiers as adults do," said Adam Thierer, a senior fellow with the Progress and Freedom Foundation, a technology think tank that shuns government regulation. "They are not voters yet. They don't have home mortgages or car loans. Most don't have drivers licenses until they are 16."

Many states restrict the disclosure of drivers license data on minors, and school administrators guard their registration records fiercely.

"Do parents really want ... that kind of information available on their children?" Collier asked.

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said raising the minimum age to 16 from 14 would help because many teens have drivers licenses by then. He has called for federal incentives for sites like MySpace to perform age verification.

Attorneys General Jim Petro of Ohio and Greg Abbott of Texas, meanwhile, support verification via credit card, while Massachusetts' Tom Reilly has called for unspecified "age and identity verification."

"Don't tell me it can't be done," Blumenthal said. "It's a question of whether the company in good faith really wants to know those ages and sacrifice some of the excitement and coolness that comes with anonymity."

Getting a reliable system developed could require expenditures and perhaps result in a smaller base of users, he said, "but if we can invent the Internet, ... surely there are means to verify the ages of those individuals, or such means can be developed."

Facebook takes a stab at verification by restricting access only to those with a valid e-mail address from a high school, college or participating company. It is happy to have 8 million registered users, less than 10 percent of MySpace's.

Industrious Kid Inc.'s imbee, for kids 8 to 14, requires parents to submit credit cards to vouch for their children.

Of course, an adult may "vouch" for an alter ego and use that to chat with kids. Thus, all imbee profiles are initially private, and adults can't do much without tricking a parent into letting them join a child's network, said Tim Donovan, imbee's vice president of marketing.

Zoey's Room, a site for girls 10-14, has verified each of its 300 members with a school or youth group. It charges \$15 a year.

"It does cost to create safe communities," said Erin Reilly, co-founder of

the organization that runs Zoey's Room. "I would rather have a manageable population and keep them all safe ... instead of looking for a million unique visitors."

IDology believes its technology could help keep children safe. A verified adult could be given greater access and the ability to share profiles openly. Anyone not willing or able to be verified, including teens, would be left with limited access and private profiles.

But any technical solution tough enough to work would penalize legitimate users who cannot be verified, said John Cardillo, Sentry's chief executive. Even 18- and 19-year-olds aren't fully in public databases yet, he said.

MySpace, instead, has been trying to catch minors after the fact.

It has technology to scan for inconsistencies and teams of employees to investigate further. For example, a user who claims to be 18 might mention a sixth-grade class elsewhere in the profile, or feature a photo of a birthday cake with only 13 candles.

Safety experts warn that creating too many barriers could drive kids to another social-networking site with fewer controls, or perhaps free-for-all chat rooms.

And ineffective solutions, they say, could give parents and children a false sense of security, increasing the dangers.

Ron Teixeira, executive director for the National Cyber Security Alliance, said parents should teach children an online equivalent of "Don't take candy from strangers." That way, he said, kids will know what to do should social networking be replaced by the next big fad.

"You need to take a holistic approach," Teixeira said. "Education is the way you teach children to be proactive, and that will stay with them forever."

#### eBay To Raise Fees for Its Online Stores

It has been clear to investors for some time that eBay Inc. has been losing the luster that turned the online auctioneer into an e-commerce bellwether. Now, CEO Meg Whitman is finally acknowledging things have been off kilter and is hoping to set things right by raising fees on the online stores that had been diverting traffic from eBay's auctions.

"We are trying to get back to the essence of eBay," Whitman said Wednesday during an interview.

Wall Street embraced the message as eBay's shares rose nearly 6 percent in extended trading Wednesday evening.

The announcement of the higher fees for eBay's "store inventory" segment coincided with the release of a second-quarter profit that fulfilled analysts' expectations.

Simply matching estimates hasn't been good enough for investors, who have been thrashing eBay's stock since the end of 2004. Whitman also hopes to make amends with Wall Street by spending up to \$2 billion to buy back

eBay's shares during the next two years.

It marks the first stock buyback in eBay's nearly eight-year history as a publicly held company.

But the amount budgeted for buying back eBay's shares looks minuscule next to the \$40 billion in stockholder wealth that has evaporated since the end of 2004 as the company's stock lost more than half its value.

The downturn reflects concerns about eBay's slackening growth, international competition, and, more recently, how the company's online payment service might be hurt by a rival offering from Internet search leader Google Inc., which is dangling lower processing fees and other incentives to entice merchants.

Despite those challenges, eBay has still be doing well.

It wasn't an apple-to-apples comparison because of new accounting rules that require publicly held companies to record the costs of employee stock options much differently than last year.

If not for this year's accounting revisions, eBay said it would have earned 24 cents per share - a figure that matched the average estimate among analysts surveyed by Thomson Financial.

Revenue for the period totaled \$1.41 billion, a 30 percent increase from \$1.09 billion a year ago. The revenue also met analysts' expectations.

Excluding its stock option expenses, eBay forecast third-quarter earnings 1 to 2 cents below the current average analyst estimate of 24 cents per share. That conservative stance is a familiar one for eBay, which has always cautiously managed Wall Street's expectations.

The upcoming price increase signifies a more aggressive attitude.

Beginning Aug. 22, eBay will raise a variety of fees for merchants operating online stores on the site. The change, affecting an area called "store inventory," could apply to up to 541,000 stores worldwide that sell on eBay. The new prices will raise fees by an average of 6 percent for affected merchants, eBay estimated.

The company isn't changing the listing fees for any other format, including its auctions. eBay ended June with 203 million registered users, but the company doesn't break down how many of those are sellers.

By raising the costs to operate stores, eBay hopes to push more listings back into the auction format, Whitman said. Store inventory listings represent about 83 percent of the volume on eBay's site but generate just 9 percent of the gross sales volume, according to the company.

The rising store inventory listings have "diluted the magic of eBay," Whitman said.

While eBay tweaks its listing, Whitman said the company isn't worried about Google hurting its PayPal service, noting it already has fended off several other competitive threats. "We are going to innovate as we always have."

PayPal fared well in the second quarter, generating \$330.7 million, a 39 percent increase from the same time last year. PayPal ended June with 114 million accountholders, a 44 percent increase from a year ago.

EBay also is bracing for a backlash against its forthcoming fee increase, although Whitman suspects the complaints will be less strident than last year when it raised listing fees for a far larger group of sellers.

"Whenever we do a fee increase, our community doesn't like it, but I think they will understand the reasons why we are doing this," Whitman said.

### Senator Stevens Ridiculed for Internet Gaffe

Sen. Ted Stevens' credibility when it comes to high technology seems to be going down the tubes.

Web sites and TV comics have made the 82-year-old senator the butt of jokes and satirical songs in recent weeks for describing the Internet last month as "a series of tubes" and for speaking of sending "an Internet" instead of an e-mail.

Most of the wisecracks portray Stevens as an old man who doesn't really get the technology over which he wields influence as the chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

Nothing could be further than the truth, the Senate committee's staff says.

Stevens uttered the remarks June 28 while trying to make the point that Internet businesses were clogging up the Internet and slowing down individual users' communications.

"They want to deliver vast amount of information over the Internet, and again, the Internet is not just something you dump something on," he said. "It's not a big truck, it's a series of tubes. And if you don't understand, those tubes can be filled. If they're filled, when you put your message in, it gets in line, it's going to be delayed by anyone who puts into that tube enormous amounts of material, enormous amounts of material."

The senator was clearly using "tubes" metaphorically, and, in fact, Internet experts often speak of the Internet's "pipes." But many have seized on the remarks to poke fun at the Republican.

Jon Stewart wisecracked on "The Daily Show": "That might have sounded more like something you'd hear from, let's say, from a crazy old man in an airport bar at 3 a.m. than the chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee."

And: "There's apparently an enormous amount of material clogging Ted Stevens' tubes. Now, perhaps a little fiber (long pause) optic cable might be the answer."

Popping up on Web sites is the "DJ Ted Stevens Techno Remix," in which audio excerpts from Stevens' speech are set to an electronic dance beat. More recently, a file appeared on the Internet that added video to the mix.

The creator of the song, Paul Holcomb, who helps run an advertising agency based in Atlanta, said the song has been downloaded more than 50,000 times.

"I think, unfortunately at Sen. Stevens' personal expense, people see the same irony that we saw when we created the file," Holcomb said. "I thought it was ironic that a person such as him, someone who has such an

influential vote, wasn't able to articulate the nuances at a basic level of how the Internet works."

A spokesman for Stevens declined to be interviewed. Commerce Committee staff director Lisa Sutherland said in a statement that Stevens has a deep understanding of the technical, legal and economic aspects of new technology.

"Yes, a few bloggers are going after him because he used the word 'tubes' instead of 'pipes' - but when you look at the body of his work and how he has crafted a bill that will not only serve Alaska, but the nation, I think the final product speaks for itself," Sutherland said.

### Storytelling, Not Journalism, Spurs Most Blogs

Many people see Web journals or "blogs" as alternatives to the mainstream media, but most Americans who run them do so as a hobby rather than a vocation, according to a report released on Wednesday.

About 77 percent of blog authors, or "bloggers," said they post to express themselves creatively rather than to get noticed or paid, according to the report, released by the Pew Internet 65 percent disagreed. Just over a third of bloggers said they engage often in journalistic activities such as verifying facts and linking to source material.

More than 40 percent of bloggers said they never quote sources or other media directly. Eleven percent said they post corrections. Sixty-one percent said they rarely or never get permission to use copyrighted material.

Fifty-five percent of bloggers write under a pseudonym. Nearly nine out of ten bloggers invite comments from other readers. Four out of five blogs use text, while 72 percent display photos and audio links play on 30 percent of blogs.

Eighty-two percent of bloggers think they will still be blogging in a year. Three percent say they have quit.

The Pew report was based on a telephone survey of 233 self-identified bloggers conducted between July 2005 and February 2006. The error margin was 6.7 percent.

The report may understate rapid changes in how people blog, as 13 percent of those surveyed used LiveJournal software to blog, MySpace was used by 9 percent and Blogger 6 percent of the time. MySpace has proliferated since the survey ended and far outnumbers other tools.

### Blogger In France Sues After Being Fired

The 33-year-old British expat in Paris writes under the pseudonym "La Petite Anglaise" and tells of love affairs, single motherhood and office bloopers with self-deprecating, "Bridget Jones"-style humor.

She kept her popular blog anonymous, never revealing her full name or

workplace. But despite her attempts at secrecy, her employer found out and fired her - unusual in labor-protected France, where workers have strong legal protections.

Now she's suing her employer in a case generating buzz on both sides of the English Channel.

The lawsuit is seen as a test case in France, where there have been few cases of bloggers getting fired, unlike in the United States, where there is even a word for it: getting "dooiced," a reference to the author of <http://www.dooce.com>, Heather B. Armstrong, who was fired for writing about her colleagues.

The expat in Paris goes only by Catherine and declined to reveal her last name because of the personal tales she recounts on the site, <http://www.petiteanglaise.com>. She says she was careful never to reveal online the name of the British company she worked for as a bilingual secretary.

Most of her office stories were, she says, "fairly humorous anecdotes about things that happened to me" - accidentally exposing her cleavage on a video conference screen or tumbling down a staircase. She also poked fun at the office portrait of Queen Elizabeth II.

"I wasn't describing what my employers did, or disclosing professional secrets or criticizing the firm or anything," she said in a telephone interview.

Her employers, the accounting firm Dixon Wilson, cited "loss of trust" and said they felt she had damaged their reputation, Catherine said. Though her name was never used online, her photo appear in a French newspaper article about her blog.

The company also pointed out that she had acknowledged lying about absences from work, saying two half-days were for childcare when she was really playing hooky. And she sometimes used her work computer to update her blog - though she says she only blogged during downtime, when others would write e-mail or read newspapers.

Dixon Wilson did not return several calls seeking comment.

On July 10, Catherine filed a complaint with a workers tribunal, suing for up to two years of salary, or about \$110,000.

On her blog, Catherine revealed her predicament this week, describing how she tried to keep up her spirits for her 3-year-old daughter the day she got fired by throwing an impromptu birthday party for a doll.

She had 10,000 hits the day of the announcement, and now she has more than 300 messages from well-wishers.

"What's the French word for dooiced?" one well-wisher wrote. "Maybe you could make one up."

Google Tests Web Pages For The Blind

Google Inc. has begun testing a new version of its search system that makes

finding information on the Web easier for the blind or visually impaired, its creator said on Wednesday.

Accessible Search, available on Google's experimental software site at <http://labs.google.com/accessible>, uses Google's standard page-ranking system and goes further by evaluating the usability of each Web page it displays.

T.V. Raman, a research scientist at Mountain View, California-based Google, said his project sorts search results based on the simplicity of page layout, the quality of design and the organization and labeling of information on each page.

"I knew it was a hard problem," Raman, who is blind, said in a phone interview. "What did I discover by doing this project? It's an even harder problem than I anticipated."

Complex, graphical designs that pack a lot of information onto large Web pages fare poorly when a low vision user relies on screen magnifiers that must expand small sections of a computer screen and make them huge, the researcher said.

A blind or dyslexic user of a screen reader that converts text into spoken words using a synthesized voice would waste a lot of time skipping over extraneous page content, he noted.

"You get a lot of conflicting signals," said Raman, who formerly worked for IBM Research before joining Google.

Accessible Search rates how, on balance, each Web page handles such issues and gives priority to pages that do the best job of balancing relevant data and solid design.

An estimated eight million people in the United States have visual impairments. Nearly three million are color blind, according to a 2001 study of Web site accessibility.

The dirty little secret of Internet design is that many shortcuts Web page builders take to make it easier to view information online, render Web pages nearly impossible to use by the visually impaired with machine-reading technology.

Web design guru Jakob Nielsen, the co-author of a 150-page 2001 study called "Beyond ALT Text: Making the Web Easy to Use of Users with Disabilities" came up with 75 principles for accessible Web design after a study of 100 computer users.

Making Web pages more accessible offers potential benefit to all users, Nielsen argues.

His ground rules apply to anyone looking to scan the Web quickly for information, in low light or on complex sites: Avoid small buttons. Minimize scrolling. Design and label pages consistently. Create good contrast between text and pages.

Google Accessible Search is built using Google Co-op technology, which the company recently introduced to enable organizations with specialized search systems that target information on specific topics such as health or food.

Raman, who worked at IBM Research before joining Google, said that by

developing better ways of measuring accessibility, Google eventually could offer consumers with specific disabilities ways to perform more customized searches.

"Perhaps senior citizens who want a less busy interface or for people who are color blind," he said.

In an ideal world, every Web page would be coded cleanly. It would take advantage of style sheets that separate the formatting of Web pages from the content contained on any page. Columns of data would be labeled. Photos would have captions.

### Food Websites Tempt Kids

Children are getting a bellyful of food marketing through Internet games and websites touting products such as Snickers, Lucky Charms and Cheetos, according to a study released Wednesday by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

In the first comprehensive review of food marketing to children on the Web, the research found 85% of leading brands that target kids in TV ads also have games and other material on the Internet. The sites promote snacks, cereal, fast food, sugary drinks and candy.

More than 500 "advergames" such as Hershey's Syrup Squirt, LifeSavers Boardwalk Bowling and M&Ms Trivia Game were offered on 77 websites.

Many sites have special features. Oreo.com has a jingle contest for songs about Oreo cookies; McDonald's Ronald.com has pages for kids to color; Capncrunch.com, which promotes the Quaker Oats cereal, offers screensavers.

"Kids who are going to these sites are immersed in a world of branded entertainment involving foods," says Vicky Rideout, director of Kaiser's Program for the Study of Entertainment Media and Health. "Online advertising to kids today doesn't have nearly as broad of a reach as TV advertising does, but it does have a lot deeper reach."

The study "is certainly an eye-opener in terms of the amount of food advertising to kids on the Web," says William Dietz of the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Policymakers and health experts increasingly are concerned about the role food advertising plays in childhood obesity. About 25 million children, or one-third of children and teens in the USA, are either overweight or on the brink of becoming so.

The study found that the 77 websites for major food products had 4,000 pages designed for kids. The sites received about 12.2 million visits from children ages 2 to 11 during a three-month period in 2005. Among other findings:

- \* 53% of the sites, such as KelloggsfunKtown.com, have commercials. Some sites have webisodes, which are serialized cartoons or TV shows featuring products or characters.

- \* 64% use viral marketing, urging children to e-mail their friends with a link to the site.



\* 38% have incentives for children to buy foods to get access to special games or prizes.

\* 25% offer children under 12 a membership so they can receive information about special offers, new commercials and new brands.

Margo Wootan of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer group, says, "The foods marketed to kids on the Internet and television are almost devoid of nutritional quality."

Something needs to be done about advertising to kids, which is "incredibly pernicious," says psychologist Kelly Brownell of the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University. "Our government will not even admit it is a problem."

But Daniel Jaffe of the Association of National Advertisers says: "We do not believe that stopping all advertising of foods to kids or putting massive government restrictions on it is going to solve the childhood obesity crisis. That hasn't worked anywhere. The Children's Advertising Review Unit has been working with the advertising community to refine its standards."

Nancy Daigler of Kraft Foods says, "By the end of the year, only our better-for-you products (the Sensible Solution line) will appear on Kraft websites that primarily reach children ages 6-11."

Says Brownell: "Parents should tell their children they are being advertised to and manipulated in the guise of games. And parents should use software to block the sites."

#### Text Messaging On Rise With Young People

E-mail is so last millennium. Young people see it as a good way to reach an elder - a parent, teacher or a boss - or to receive an attached file. But increasingly, the former darling of high-tech communication is losing favor to instant and text messaging, and to the chatter generated on blogs and social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace.

The shift is starting to creep into workplace communication, too.

"In this world of instant gratification, e-mail has become the new snail mail," says 25-year-old Rachel Quizon from Norwalk, Calif. She became addicted to instant messaging in college, where many students are logged on 24/7.

Much like home postal boxes have become receptacles for junk mail, bills and the occasional greeting card, electronic mailboxes have become cluttered with spam. That makes them a pain to weed through, and the problem is only expected to worsen as some e-mail providers allow online marketers to bypass spam filters for a fee.

Beyond that, e-mail has become most associated with school and work.

"It used to be just fun," says Danah Boyd, a doctoral candidate who studies social media at the University of California, Berkeley. "Now it's about parents and authority."

It means that many people often don't respond to e-mails unless they have to.

Boyd's own Web page carries this note: "please note that i'm months behind on e-mail and i may not respond in a timely manner." She, too, is more easily reached with the "ping" of an instant message.

That said, no one is predicting the death of e-mail. Besides its usefulness in formal correspondence, it also offers the ability to send something from "one to many," says Anne Kirah, a senior design anthropologist at Microsoft who studies people's high-tech habits. That might include an announcement for a club or invitation to a party.

Quizon e-mails frequently in her corporate communications job at a hospital, and also uses it when she needs documentation - for instance, when dealing with vendors for her upcoming wedding. In those cases, she says e-mail "still holds more clout."

But when immediacy is a factor - as it often is - most young people much prefer the telephone or instant messaging for everything from casual to heart-to-heart conversations, according to research from the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

"And there is a very strong sense that the migration away from e-mail continues," says Lee Rainie, the director at Pew.

For many young people, it's about choosing the best communication tool for the situation.

You might use text messaging during a meeting that requires quiet, Rainie says, or make a phone call to discuss sensitive subjects so there's no written record.

Still, some who've gotten caught up in the trend toward brevity wonder if it's making things too impersonal. "Don't want to see someone? Then call them. Don't want to call someone? E-mail them. Don't want to take the trouble of writing sentences? Text them," says 33-year-old Matthew Felling, an admitted "serial texter" who is also the spokesman for the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington.

"It's the ultimate social crutch to avoid personal communication."

But others don't see it that way. They think the shift toward IM and text is simply more efficient and convenient.

Chintan Talati, who is 28, often uses instant message with other younger peers at his work, a California-based Web site that provides automotive information to consumers. He prefers IM over e-mail. "It's a way to get a quicker answer," he says.

His baby boomer colleagues don't necessarily share that view - and often find instant messaging overwhelming.

Boyd has found much the same in her research at Berkeley.

"Adults who learn to use IM later have major difficulty talking to more than two people at one time - whereas the teens who grew up on it have no problem talking to a bazillion people at once," Boyd says. "They understand how to negotiate the interruptions a lot better."

Kirah, at Microsoft, even thinks young people's brains work differently because they've grown up with IM, making them more adept at it.

For that reason, she says bosses should go right ahead and use their e-mail - and shouldn't feel threatened by IM.

"Like parents, they try to control their children," she says. "But companies really need to respond to the way people work and communicate."

The focus, she says, should be the outcome.

"Nine to 5 has been replaced with 'Give me a deadline and I will meet your deadline,'" Kirah says of young people's work habits. "They're saying 'I might work until 2 a.m. that night. But I will do it all on my terms.'"

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